

FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

November 7, 2007

**Statement of Representative Pete Stark  
In Support of Equal Rights for All**

MR. STARK: Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of equal rights for all people. No job applicant should be discriminated against because of his or her race, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, political affiliation -- or sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA, H.R. 3685) simply modernizes existing non-discrimination law to prohibit discriminatory employment practices on the basis of sexual orientation.

Everyone knows that employment discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation occurs daily in our country. Many of us know people who've been the victims of such discrimination. It is wrong and it should be against the law. I'm only sorry it has taken us so long to bring this bill forward.

This legislation succeeds in advancing civil rights. However, it still falls short of what needs to be accomplished. By no means is this bill as inclusive as it should be. It fails to include gender identity as a protected class. I commend Congresswoman Baldwin for her efforts to include the transgender community in today's legislation. Had her amendment reached a vote on the House floor, I would have proudly supported it.

Our Declaration of Independence states that Americans have an inalienable right to liberty and happiness, neither of which can be achieved if equal rights are granted to some and not others. Today's bill continues to leave transgender individuals without equal protection from discrimination.

I support this bill because it brings the country one step closer to a prejudice-free workplace, but I implore my colleagues to work toward legislation that guarantees fair employment practices to all people.

Most of us look back on America's history and bemoan that women and non-whites had to struggle for rights that should have automatically been granted to them. If we as a Congress cannot stand against discrimination for a group of citizens who simply demand the right to be treated fairly in the workplace, we are no better than past legislators who opposed a woman's right to vote or the right of African Americans to sit in the same section of a bus or restaurant as whites. I urge my colleagues to do what is right and support this legislation.